

# LET'S TALK TOURISM

## Iowa Legislative Report

### Capitol News Issue # 5

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#### Legislators Finish 10th Week

The Legislature wrapped up its tenth week of work on St. Patrick's Day, but nobody really looked like celebrating as they left the Capitol. Many legislators were heading home to public forums and town hall meetings (a legislator's work is never done). Others were hauling heavy piles of bills and budgets to their cars - a little "light" reading for the weekend.

Sunday (March 20) will be the 70<sup>th</sup> day of the shortened 100-day legislative session. While the end is near, the Republican controlled House and the Democrat controlled Senate are miles apart on budgets and 'must do' bills. And once the first redistricting plan is released (expected on March 31), things will really slow down as legislators see what their new districts look like, if they are thrown into a district with another legislator, and if they have to move to have a chance at being re-elected.

The pace at the Capitol was sluggish this week, surprising since we are just a couple weeks away from the second legislative funnel. On April 1, all Senate Files need to be voted out of House committees, and all House Files need to be voted out of Senate committees. That means one chamber must have voted the bill out, and the committee in the other chamber must have passed it out. After April 1, committee work is done except for those committees that are exempt from funnel deadlines (Government Oversight, Appropriations, and Ways & Means).

So if any bills are going to survive this second deadline, committees will need to start meeting and passing out bills. Next week legislators will split their time between floor debate and committee meetings - and the final week of the funnel will be mostly committee work.

## → School Start Date

Unfortunately, bills to try to wrestle the earliest school start date back to a reasonable compromise of August 25th or the 4th Monday in August did not survive the first funnel deadline.



Legislation ([HF 534](#)) to replace the number of school days with a set number of hours is still alive and is set to be debated in the House this coming week. This bill, as approved by the House Education Committee, essentially abandons altogether a school start date and would allow school to start any time after July 1. TFI is obviously registered against this bill.

The only amendment ([H-1388](#)) filed to HF 534, as of this writing, is one by the bill's original author that would restore the school start date back to the week in which September 1st falls. The amendment still leaves the waiver in place. While the amendment does not solve the school start date problem, it at least maintains the status quo - a September start date with a waiver that requires no justification - rather than allowing the July 1 date to go into the Iowa Code.

**Please take a moment to contact your House and Senate members in favor of H-1388 to House File 534.** Tell them you would rather see a real September school start date enforced, but that S-1388 is a step in the right direction by at least ensuring we don't move backward!

**Then, go recruit another 5 people** to sign up at <http://www.saveiowasummers.com/> Having more and more parents and teachers involving themselves in this fight is what will turn the tide.

## → Budget Woes

As we said earlier, the House, Senate and the Governor are miles apart on the budget, so there is still time to influence the process.

The current Economic Development Appropriations Bill (SSB 1199) contains cuts to the Department that are similar in percentage to cuts being made in all parts



of the state budget. Given the massive DED Restructuring project, it is difficult to get too excited or nervous about their numbers until we know their effect.

However, the Infrastructure Budget bill ([House File 648](#)) contains some deep cuts in many programs of interest to TFI members. Among other things, the bill includes the following:

- Zeroes out the \$10 Million River Enhancement Community Attractions and Tourism (RECAT) program
- Reduces the Community Attractions and Tourism (CAT) program funding from \$12 Million down to \$5 Million
- Reduces the Environment First Fund allocation by \$9 Million
- Zeroes out the \$500,000 funding for Regional Sports Authorities
- Deappropriates the \$6.5 Million allocation for passenger rail in the next fiscal year AND the \$4.2 Million from the CURRENT fiscal year
- Zeros out the Grow Iowa Values Fund that funds many DED programs

Be sure to take some time to contact your legislators on some of these issues. There are a number of new legislators this year, so be sure to explain to them why these programs are important.



## Redistricting Public Hearings Set

As we mentioned in our first article, the first Redistricting Plan will be released on Thursday, March 31. By law, Iowa's Temporary Redistricting Committee must host at least three public hearings and issue a report on their findings from those hearings within 14 days of the plan's release. Four public hearing sites have now been announced, with six additional sites available via the state's ICN network (video conferencing). You can attend these meetings just to learn more about the redistricting plan, and may ask questions. You can also give your opinions about the plan. Here are the sites for the public hearings:



**Monday, April 4 (6:00 - 8:30 p.m.)**

**Council Bluffs** (main site) - Public Library, ICN Room (400 Willow Avenue)

**Mason City** (video conference) - NIACC (500 College Drive)

**Sioux City** (video conference) - Northwest AEA (1520 Morningside Avenue)

**Spencer** (video conference) - Public Library (21 E. Third)

**Tuesday, April 5 (7:00 - 9:00 p.m.)**

**Bettendorf** - Mississippi Bend AEA, 729 21<sup>st</sup> Street

**Wednesday, April 6 (6:30 - 9:00 p.m.)**

**Cedar Rapids** (main site) - Kirkwood Community College, ICN Room (6301 Kirkwood Blvd SW)

**Dubuque** (video conference) - Keystone AEA, 2310 Chaney Road

**Ottumwa** (video conference) - Great Prairie AEA, 2814 N. Court Street

**Waterloo** (video conference) - Hawkeye Community College, 1501 E. Orange Rd.

**Thursday, April 7 (7:00 - 9:00 p.m.)**

**Des Moines** - Wallace State Office Building (Auditorium), 502 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street

**Want to know more?** You can learn more about Iowa's redistricting process online at <http://www.legis.iowa.gov/Resources/Redist/about.aspx>.

**Your Advocacy Toolkit:**

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[Bill Tracker](#)

[TFI Resources](#)

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